AVATAR

The Last Airbender

Show #210

BOOK TWO: EARTH
CHAPTER TEN: "The Library"

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ACT ONE

EXT. GOLDEN PRAIRIE - MID-DAY

It's a hot day, as Aang and friends stare out over the prairie. The plains are vast, flat, and covered with holes.

SOKKA
What's out here?

TOPH
A lot, actually. There's hundreds of little--

AANG
Shh! I know you can see underground, but don't ruin the surprise.

Toph shrugs. Aang plucks a reed from the ground.

AANG (cont'd)
Just watch...

Aang pokes a few holes in the reed and blows a NOTE. A second later, a SINGING GROUNDHOG pokes its head out of a hole, and SINGS the same note in response.

AANG (cont'd)
(GIGGLES) Yeah!

He plays a different NOTE, and another groundhog pokes its head up from a different hole and SINGS the new note.

AANG (cont'd)
I'm putting an orchestra together!

SOKKA
Orchestra, huh? Well la-dee-da.

SINGING GROUNDHOG #1
La!

SINGING GROUNDHOG #2
Dee!

SINGING GROUNDHOG #3
Da!

Aang plays a series of VARIOUS NOTES on the reed, causing the groundhogs to pop up and SING in a comically hurried fashion. Aang plays a delightful melody, as the groundhogs respond with a slight delay, creating a "singing a round"-like effect.

Katara CLAPS and joins in Aang's enjoyment of the singing groundhogs. Sokka plugs the reed with his finger, silencing Aang.

SOKKA
This is great and all, but don't we have more important things to worry about? We should be making plans.

TOPH
We did make plans. We're all picking mini-vacations.

SOKKA
There's no time for vacations.

AANG
I'm learning the elements as fast as I can. I practice hard every day with Toph and Katara -- I've been training my arrow off!

KATARA
Yeah, what's wrong with having a little fun in our down time?

SOKKA
Even if you do master all of the elements, then what? It's not like we have a map of the Fire Nation. Should we just head West until we reach the Fire Lord's house? "Knock, knock! Hello, Fire Lord? Anybody home?" I don't think so. We need some intelligence if we're going to win this war.

Aang blows another NOTE on his reed, prompting a singing groundhog to pop up right underneath Sokka. With Sokka now sitting on the animal's head, it SINGS the note back to Aang. Aang sees that Sokka is not amused.

AANG
Alright. We'll finish our vacations, and then we'll look for Sokka's "intelligence".

Sokka frowns at Aang's veiled insult. Aang hands Katara a map the kids have been using.

AANG (cont'd)
Your turn, Katara. Where would you like to go on your mini-vacation?

She looks at the map.

KATARA
How about the Misty Palms Oasis? That sounds refreshing.

AANG
Oh, yeah! I've been there -- it's a pristine natural ice spring, and I usually don't use the word pristine. It's one of nature's wonders.

EXT. MISTY PALMS OASIS - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

The sun beats down as the kids climb down from Appa. Instead of a natural wonder, they are faced with a tacky cantina called the Misty Palms Oasis.

AANG
Must've changed ownership since I was here. (CHUCKLES SHEEPISHLY)

He smiles at Katara, who seems displeased. He ties Appa's reigns to a post. The kids walk into the cantina, passing by a group of raggedy desert-dwellers (the SANDBENDERS). Sokka eyes one of them, who glares at him and spits some strange substance onto the ground, right in front of Sokka's feet. Katara grabs her brother by the arm and leads him inside before the situation escalates.

INT. MISTY PALMS OASIS - CONTINUOUS

The kids enter to see a busy watering hole crowded with travelers and merchants. Sokka sees a SERVER with dual katanas. The man quickly chops up a block of ice with some tropical fruits, and pours it into a glass, creating a frozen fruit beverage for a happy customer. Sokka looks at it, longingly.

SOKKA
I don't see anything wrong with having one of those fruity beverages while we plan our strategy. Excuse me.

Suddenly, PROFESSOR ZEI, an Avatar version of Indiana Jones, turns around to find himself face to face with Aang. (NOTE: If Indian Jones is 70%/30% adventurer/scholar, then this guy is 30%/70%, more emphasis on scholar.)

PROFESSOR ZEI
(GASP)

He startles, and spills his frozen fruit beverage all over the Avatar.

AANG
No worries. I clean up easy.

WHOOSH! Aang clears the spill off himself with Airbending.

PROFESSOR ZEI
You're a living relic!

AANG
Thanks. I try.

PROFESSOR ZEI
(hushed tone)
An Air Nomad... right in front of me.

Professor Zei bows.

PROFESSOR ZEI (cont'd)
Professor Zei, Head of Anthropology at Ba Sing Se University. Tell me, which of the Air Temples do you hail from?

AANG
The Southern Temple.

Zei clasps his hands together in bliss.

PROFESSOR ZEI
Oh splendid! Tell me -- what was the primary agricultural product of your people?

AANG
Uh... are fruit pies an agricultural product?

PROFESSOR ZEI
(deadly serious)
Truly fascinating. That's one for the journal.

He reaches for a quill at the bar and quickly jots something down on a parchment.

SOKKA
So, Professor -- you're obviously a well-traveled guy.
(MORE)

SOKKA (cont'd)
Do you have a more current map? Ours seems to be a little dated.

PROFESSOR ZEI
Certainly.

Sokka opens the guy's map.

SOKKA
(a bit disappointed)
What, no Fire Nation? Doesn't anybody have a good map of that place?

Katara notices vast expanses of the Earth Kingdom desert marked with dotted lines.

KATARA
You've made a lot of trips into the desert.

PROFESSOR ZEI
All in vain, I'm afraid. I've found lost civilizations all over the Earth Kingdom, but I haven't managed to find the crown jewel -- Wan Shi Tong's (PRON: wahn she tong) Library.

TOPH
You've spent years walking through the desert... to find some guy's library?

PROFESSOR ZEI
This library is more valuable than gold, little lady. It's said to contain a vast collection of knowledge. And knowledge is priceless!

TOPH
Mm. Sounds like good times.

PROFESSOR ZEI
(oblivious)
Oh, it is. According to legend, it was built by the great Knowledge Spirit, Wan Shi Tong, with the help of his foxy knowledge seekers.

SOKKA
(intrigued)
Oh... so this spirit has attractive assistants, huh?

KATARA
I think he means they look like actual foxes, Sokka.

PROFESSOR ZEI
You're both right! Handsome little creatures. Wan Shi Tong and his knowledge seekers collected books from all over the world and put them on display for mankind to read, so that we might better ourselves.

SOKKA
If this place has books from all over the world, you think they've got info on the Fire Nation? A map, maybe?

PROFESSOR ZEI
I wouldn't know, but if such a thing exists, it's in Wan Shi Tong's library.

SOKKA
Then it's settled. Aang, I do believe it's my turn: I'd like to spend my vacation at the library!

Toph and Aang EXHALE loudly, signaling their disapproval.

TOPH
Hey, what about me? When do I get to pick?

SOKKA
You got to work here a little longer before you qualify for vacation time.

Sokka smiles and folds his arms with satisfaction.

PROFESSOR ZEI
Of course, there is the matter of finding it. I've made several trips into the Si Wong Desert, and almost died each time. I'm afraid that desert's impossible to cross.

Sokka smiles smugly, slightly smirking slyly.

SOKKA
Professor, would you like to see our sky bison?

Zei shoots up into the air in excitement.

PROFESSOR ZEI
A sky bison? You actually have one?!

EXT. MISTY PALMS OASIS - MOMENTS LATER

As the gang exits the cantina with Professor Zei, they notice several of the Sandbenders are now standing a little too close to Appa, giving him a once-over.

PROFESSOR ZEI
Sandbenders! Shoo! Away from the bison!

He runs out the door of the cantina, yelling at the Sandbenders.

EXT. SKY - APPA'S BACK - MINUTES LATER

The kids and the professor are now soaring above the desert. Below them is miles and miles of barren sand, but the professor is happy enough just to be on a sky bison.

PROFESSOR ZEI
Tell me, sky bison -- are you the last of your breed?

APPA
(BELLOWS)

PROFESSOR ZEI
Delightful! I only wish I spoke his tongue -- oh, the stories this beast could tell!

MOMO
(CHITTER AT LENGTH AS IF TELLING A STORY)

PROFESSOR ZEI
Shush, chatty monkey.

Aang looks at a drawing of the library -- even in the artist's rendering, it's an ornate palace whose elegance is on par with the Taj Mahal.

AANG
Wow. Shouldn't be too hard to find a place like this out here...

Sokka and Momo look down below, seeing nothing but sand.

TIME DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT SKY - LATER

The light of the sun is beginning to refract on the surface of the hot sand below. Still no library in sight.

TOPH
(testy)
Aw, does this place even exist?

PROFESSOR ZEI
Some say it doesn't.

TOPH
Shouldn't you have mentioned that before?

TIME DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT SKY - LATER

Everyone is now beginning to grow restless, with the library nowhere to be found. Suddenly, Toph points excitedly.

TOPH
There it is!

Everyone rushes to look to where she is pointing, then realizes they've been duped.

TOPH (cont'd)
That's what it will sound like when one of you spots it.

Everyone glares at Toph incredulously. Katara looks out over the horizon.

KATARA
It shouldn't be this hard to spot a giant ornate building from the air.

Suddenly, Sokka spots something below (with his spyglass?).

SOKKA
Down there. What's that?

Everyone looks down to see a little spire sticking out of the sand below. (NOTE: the protruding portion of the spire needs to be nondescript enough not to be immediately recognizable as part of the library.) Aang takes Appa down for a look...

EXT. DESERT GROUND - SECONDS LATER

Appa touches down. Nearby, several buzzard-wasps are feeding on an animal carcass. (NOTE: storyboard tastefully! Perhaps little bibs on the buzzards?) The kids cautiously avoid the creatures, and keep walking to the strange structure.

KATARA
Forget it. It's obviously not what we're looking for. The building in this drawing is enormous.

The group sees a small, ethereal fox-like creature coming toward the spire, carrying a scroll in its mouth.

SOKKA
What kind of animal is that?

The kids and the professor watch in awe as the ghostly fox glides straight up the side of the tower and enters through an open window at the top.

PROFESSOR ZEI
I think that was one of the knowledge seekers. We must be close to the library!

SOKKA
No -- this <u>is</u> the library. Look!

He points to the drawing, at the tall spire atop the library.

SOKKA (cont'd)
It's completely buried.

<u>END OF ACT ONE</u>

ACT TWO

EXT. DESERT GROUND - CONTINUOUS

The kids stand around the mysterious spire with the professor, who is very upset.

PROFESSOR ZEI
Buried?! My life's ambition is now full of sand!
(suddenly calm)
Well, time to start excavating.

He pulls out a tiny pick and a tiny brush. Toph approaches the tower, and does a little "sonar" style Earthbending move.

TOPH
Actually, that won't be necessary. The inside seems to be completely intact... and it's huge.

SOKKA
That fox thingy went in through a window. I say we climb up there and give it a look...

TOPH
I say you guys go ahead without me.

KATARA
You've got something against libraries?

TOPH
(shrugs)
I've held books before, and I got to tell you, they don't exactly do it for me.

KATARA
Oh right. Sorry.

TOPH
(cheerful)
Let me know if they have something you can listen to.

Sokka ties a rope onto his boomerang and throws it around the top of the spire.

APPA
(BELLOWS ANXIOUSLY)

AANG
(comforting Appa)
Don't worry, buddy. I'm not making you go underground ever again. You can stay out here with Toph.

Appa looks at Toph.

TOPH
(to Appa, super casual)
What's up.

INT. LIBRARY - SECONDS LATER

With Sokka's boomerang-rope securely fastened at the top of the spire, the kids descend into the main corridor of the library. They gaze around in disbelief at otherworldly designs around them that could only have been made by spirit artisans.

PROFESSOR ZEI
Oh, it's breathtaking! The spirits spared no expense in designing this place. Look at those beautiful buttresses!

AANG/SOKKA
(SNICKERING)

PROFESSOR ZEI
What's funny?

AANG
Nothing, we just like architecture.

PROFESSOR ZEI
As do I!

They all come to the bottom of the rope and look up at the ceiling -- it's a large mosaic of an owl.

PROFESSOR ZEI (cont'd)
My word! The exquisite mosaic handiwork of this tile-rendered avian symbol...

Everyone looks at the professor a bit confused.

PROFESSOR ZEI (cont'd)
(realizing)
Er... nice owl.

Suddenly, they hear a noise approaching -- a LOUD RUSTLING noise. Everyone ducks behind a large stack of books. They listen in suspense as the rustling grows nearer, and louder. The kids peek out through the cracks between the book stacks to see what's making the rustling -- it appears to be... feathers? Aang peers through his peephole, rather puzzled. Suddenly, a large owl-like face appears in front of him, with its eye peering right back Aang.

CREATURE
I know you're back there.

The kids look at each other, then to the professor, who is trembling with excitement. After a tense BEAT, he jumps up to greet the creature.

PROFESSOR ZEI
Hello, I'm Professor Zei, Head of Anthropology at Ba Sing Se University.

He bows to the owl. Seeing they've been discovered, the kids come out of hiding. Before them stands the KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT -- a bizarre owl spirit who stands as tall as a large man. He cocks his head sideways, studying his trespassers.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
You should leave the way you came... unless you want to become a STUFFED "head of anthropology."

He motions to an exotic array of taxidermied heads. The professor cowers. Sokka steps up and takes charge.

SOKKA
Are you the spirit who brought this library to the physical world?

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
Indeed, I am Wan Shi Tong, "he who knows ten thousand things". And you are obviously humans, which, by the way, are no longer permitted in my study.

AANG
What do you have against humans?

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
(GUFFAW) Humans only bother learning things to get the edge on other humans.
(MORE)

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT (cont'd)
Like that Firebender who came to this place a few years ago, looking to destroy his enemy...

INSERT SHOT of Zhao in the library.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT (cont'd)
(to kids)
So who are you trying to destroy?

SOKKA
(covering badly)
What? No... no destroying. We're not into that.

Wan Shi Tong thrusts his beak into Sokka's face, staring deep into his soul.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
Then why have you come here?

SOKKA
Um... knowledge for knowledge's sake?

A Beat.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
If you're going to lie to an all-knowing spirit being, you should at least put some effort into it.

SOKKA
I'm not lying... I'm here with the Avatar, and he's the bridge between our worlds -- he'll vouch for me.

Sokka sticks a sharp elbow in Aang's ribs.

AANG
(pressured)
Uh... yeah, I'll vouch. We will not abuse the knowledge in your library, good spirit. You have my word.

The owl considers for a beat as he scrutinizes Aang.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
Very well. I'll let you peruse my vast collection.

Everyone looks relieved.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT (cont'd)
On one condition...

Everyone tenses up again.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT (cont'd)
To prove your worth as scholars, you have to contribute some worthwhile knowledge.

He turns to the professor.

PROFESSOR ZEI
Please accept this tome as a donation to your library.

He hands the spirit an old, rare tome. Wan Shi Tong's eyes widen. This obviously pleases him.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
First edition, very nice.

The spirit turns to Katara, expecting a similar donation. She gives him one of her Waterbending scrolls.

KATARA
I have an authentic Waterbending scroll.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
Oh, these illustrations are quite stylish.

Satisfied, Wan Shi Tong turns to Aang, who feels around in his pockets.

AANG
Uh... Ooh! I know!

He pulls out a piece of parchment. The Knowledge Spirit unrolls it to see that it's a wanted poster of Aang.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
(less enthused)
I suppose that counts.

He turns to Sokka.

SOKKA
Oh, great spirit... check this out--

Sokka pulls out a piece of twine and ties an elaborate knot.

SOKKA (cont'd)
Ta-da. It's a special knot. That counts as knowledge.

The knowledge spirit glares at him for a beat.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
(SIGHS) You're not very bright, are you?
(then, giving permission)
Enjoy the library.

Sokka looks irked. The spirit takes the knot from him and walks off.

SOKKA
(narrowing eyes, sotto)
Bright enough to fool you...

EXT. DESERT GROUND - LIBRARY SPIRE - SUNSET

Toph is now having an awkward moment with Appa, trying really hard to make conversation.

TOPH
So... You like flyin'? (LONG AWKWARD BEAT) Of course, I'm more comfortable on the ground where I can see. I don't "see" the way you do; I feel the vibrations in the ground with my feet. But this sand is so loose and shifty...

We see her shift some sand around with her feet.

TOPH (cont'd)
It makes everything look fuzzy.

APPA
(BELLOWS)

TOPH
Not that there's anything wrong with fuzzy.

INT. LIBRARY STUDY ROOM - LATER

The kids and the professor are now browsing through books from Wan Shi Tong's library. Aang is reading a book about the ancient lion-turtles.

AANG
Hey look at these weird lion-turtle things.

SOKKA
(shrugs)
I've seen weirder.

Katara is reading from a book about past Avatars.

KATARA
Aang, did you know in a past life you were left-handed?

AANG
(smiling)
I always knew I was special.

Sokka finds an old piece of parchment, preserved in a glass case. He reads from it.

SOKKA
"The Darkest Day in Fire Nation History"... It's got a date at the top. But it doesn't say anything else.

INT. LIBRARY - LONG CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Sokka exits the study and walks down the long hall of books, searching for something. Aang and Katara follow him.

AANG
Sokka? Where are you going?

SOKKA
I want to know what happened to the Fire Nation on their darkest day -- this could be promising.

INT. LIBRARY - DAMAGED CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Sokka rounds another corner at the end of a long shelf of books. He glances at a directory in the hall.

SOKKA
The information on the Fire Nation should be right up here...

Then, he stops dead in his tracks and reacts in shock. His friends catch up with him to see that an entire wing of the library has been obliterated by fire damage. Absolutely nothing -- shelves or books -- remains.

AANG
Firebenders.

KATARA
They destroyed everything having to do with the Fire Nation.

SOKKA
That's so unfair! Just when I think I'm one step ahead of the Fire Nation, it turns out they beat us here a long time ago.

Katara and Aang pat Sokka on the shoulder, comfortingly.

SOKKA (cont'd)
I need to know what happened on the "Darkest Day."

Suddenly, one of the seekers approaches Sokka, beckoning him.

SOKKA (cont'd)
(uncomfortable)
Hello... little weird fox guy...

PROFESSOR ZEI
Seems it's trying to assist you.

It glides across the room and looks back at Sokka.

SOKKA
(apprehensive to seeker)
Um... Sure, I, guess I'll follow you...

Sokka motions for his friends to come with him. They follow the seeker across the damaged chamber, back into the long corridor of the library.

INT. LIBRARY - LONG CORRIDOR

The kids and the professor follow the seeker across the corridor. The seeker stops at a set of drawers. It pulls one of the drawers open with its teeth. Suddenly, a SECRET DOOR opens, and the seeker leads the kids inside.

INT. LIBRARY - PLANETARY CALENDAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room appears to be a large, domed planetarium, elegantly crafted from bronze, jade, and gold.

PROFESSOR ZEI
This room is a true marvel -- a mechanical wonder! It's a planetarium that shows the heavens moving.

SOKKA
Uh, this is beautiful, but... how is it helpful?

Katara is looking at a set of three dials on a crude control panel at one end of the chamber. (These are not high-tech; see "Myst" and "The Dark Crystal".)

KATARA
Maybe these dials represent dates and times. Sokka, try entering the date from that parchment you took.

SOKKA
Shh! Katara!
(sotto, urgent)
Not in front of the fox. He's with the owl.

Katara looks at the seeker, who wags his little spirit tail innocently. Sokka discreetly takes the parchment out of his coat. He looks at it, then begins to turn the dials on the control panel to match the date. As he turns the controls, the room leaps to life: a projection "bulb" (a brightly glowing crystal) is uncovered in the center of the room. It projects stars onto the ceiling above. Mechanical parts begin to move too -- a large, physical model of the sun descends from the ceiling, also shining with the help of a crystal inside it. Models of planets orbit through the room (attached to poles, which are powered by gears). The kids and the professor release an astonished GASP at the magnificent representation of the cosmos.

AANG
Wow. I gotta hand it to you, Sokka... you picked the best mini-vacation, for sure.

Sokka finishes turning the dials. He seems unsatisfied.

KATARA
Hey wait, what happened to the sun?

AANG
Great. You must have broken it.

Sokka turns the dials a bit, changing the date -- this causes the sun to rise and set in the sky, shining on and off with day and night.

SOKKA
It's not broken.

He changes it back to the date on the parchment.

SOKKA (cont'd)
The sun is behind the moon -- it's a solar eclipse. It's literally the darkest day in Fire Nation history... now I get it! Something awful happened on that day -- I don't know what, but I do know why. Firebenders lose their bending during a solar eclipse!

Sokka sees that he is now grabbing Aang by the shoulders and shaking him. He realizes what he's doing and lets go.

SOKKA (cont'd)
(to Aang)
Sorry.

KATARA
That makes sense! I mean, think of what the lunar eclipse at the North Pole did to the Waterbenders... this is huge.

Sokka sees the seeker, who is still begging.

SOKKA
Fine, you earned it.

Sokka tosses the spirit a piece of meat from his satchel. It gobbles up the treat and glides away.

SOKKA (CONT'D) (cont'd)
We've got to get this information to the Earth King at Ba Sing Se. We'll wait for the next eclipse, then we'll invade the Fire Nation when they're totally helpless! The Fire Lord is going down!

Sokka realizes everyone is motioning for him to shut up. Wan Shi Tong is standing right behind him with a very cross expression.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
Mortals are so predictable. And such terrible liars.

Off Sokka's terrified GULP...

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. LIBRARY - PLANETARY CALENDAR ROOM

The kids look terrified as the Knowledge Spirit confronts them.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
You betrayed my trust. From the beginning you intended to misuse this knowledge for evil purposes!

SOKKA
You don't understand -- if anyone's evil, it's the Fire Nation. You saw what they did to your library -- they're destructive and dangerous. We need this information!

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
You think you're the first person to believe their war was justified? Countless others before you have come here, seeking weapons or weaknesses or battle strategies.

AANG
(pleading)
We had no choice. Please, we're just desperate to protect the people we love.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
And now, I'm going to protect what I love...

He begins to flap his wings ferociously, and the walls of the library begin to tremble.

AANG
What are you doing?!

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
I'm taking my knowledge back. No one will ever abuse it again!

Sand begins to leak into the room.

KATARA
He's sinking the building! We've got to get out of here!

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
I'm afraid I can't allow that either. You already know too much.

And with that, Wan Shi Tong begins to transform into a much more menacing owl-dragon version of himself. He begins attacking the kids, slashing at them with his razor-sharp beak and talons. The tremors grow stronger, and more sand begins to gush into the library. The kids run for their lives.

EXT. DESERT GROUND - LIBRARY SPIRE - EVENING

That moment, Toph is sitting on the sand, attempting to nap. Suddenly, Appa sees the library tower sink into the ground several feet.

APPA
(WORRIED BELLOW)

TOPH
I already told you, I don't want to snuggle.

At that moment, we see some sands shifting beneath her feet as it begins sloughing into the library. She puts her hands on the tower to feel what's going on.

TOPH (cont'd)
Library's sinking, LIBRARY'S SINKING!

Toph leaps into action, performing an energetic Earthbending maneuver that stops the sinking tower. She struggles to hold it in place.

INT. LIBRARY - LONG CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The kids peel out of the planetarium and run away from the giant owl-dragon, who is now tearing through stacks of books to get to the trespassers.

PROFESSOR ZEI
(YELPS) Great Knowledge Spirit -- I beg you: do NOT destroy your vast collection of priceless tomes!

The owl swats at the professor, but Aang Airbends him out of the way, just in time to avoid a nasty swipe of the spirit's claw.

AANG
We've got to get back to the surface!

Aang does another Airbending move knocking over a mammoth bookcase (or two), temporarily blocking the corridor and stalling the owl-dragon. The kids run for it. Suddenly, Sokka stops and ducks behind a shelf. Katara and Aang notice his hesitation. (IMPORTANT: The professor should quietly disappear here.)

KATARA
Sokka! Let's go!

SOKKA
But we still don't know when the next eclipse is going to happen!

KATARA
Don't be stupid! We'll find out later!

SOKKA
No we won't! If we leave this place, we'll never get the information. Aang, come with me to the planetarium. I need cover. Katara, take Momo and get out of here!

KATARA
But--

The owl-dragon BURSTS through the bookcase and into the corridor.

SOKKA
Go!

With Momo on her shoulders, Katara sprints toward the exit. The Knowledge Spirit sees her, and gives chase. Aang and Sokka go in the opposite direction.

KATARA
Hurry, Sokka!

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUOUS

Toph is still struggling to hold up the sinking library. Appa grows uneasy as something approaches on the horizon.

APPA
(GUTTURAL GROWL)

TOPH
What is it now?

Before we can get a closer look at the approaching party, a massive sandstorm begins to whip up around Toph and Appa. The storm quickly swells to an unbearable intensity.

TOPH (cont'd)
Who's there?!

Through the swirling sand, we can barely make out the figures of men riding some sort of sailing vehicle. The mysterious riders circle Toph and Appa, bending the sand into a fury. Toph continues to focus all her strength on holding up the library.

INT. LIBRARY - LONG CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Sokka and Aang sprint toward the end of the hall toward the secret door to the planetarium.

AANG
Why are we doing this?

SOKKA
Because if this calendar can tell us about eclipses in the past, then maybe it can project when the next one will be!

AANG
You can't possibly check every single date.

SOKKA
I don't have to. We just need to check every date before Sozin's comet arrives. Because after that... well, try not to think about that.

Sokka pulls the secret drawer that opens the door, and he and Aang dart inside.

INT. LIBRARY - PLANETARY CALENDAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sokka runs to the dials and starts spinning them rapidly. The stars and planets in the room begin to rotate, wax, and wane with the passing of each day. Sokka and Aang watch the sun, anxiously, rooting for the moon to pass in front of it.

AANG
Come on, eclipse.

Finally, he comes to a day where the crystal in the model sun is not shining.

SOKKA
That's it! The solar eclipse!
It's just a few months away...

Sokka looks back at the dials, and quickly scrawls something down as if writing down the date.

SOKKA (cont'd)
Got it. Now let's get to Ba Sing Se!

EXT. DESERT GROUND - LIBRARY SPIRE - CONTINUOUS

The sandbenders are now fighting harder than ever, throwing ropes over Appa like Lilliputians. They pull the ropes tight, subduing him.

TOPH
(bravado)
Don't make me put this down!

We can barely see Appa through the sand, but it looks like he's in a struggle.

APPA
(BELLOWS FOR HELP)

With anguish visible on her face, Toph lets go of the library spire. It begins slipping into the sand. Toph acts quickly and tries to rescue Appa with an Earthbending attack, but her blow dissipates in the soft sand. She turns back to the spire, which is now disappearing beneath the sand! Toph digs it out with her bending and slowly drags it back up. Behind her, we see the attackers resume their assault on Appa. For the first time, we clearly see that it's the sandbenders from the cantina.

APPA (cont'd)
(BELLOWS FOR HELP)

ON TOPH, who is losing her grip on the sinking spire.

TOPH
No! Stop sinking!

APPA
(BELLOWS FOR HIS LIFE)

TOPH
No!

She turns, releasing the library and delivering a hard but sloppy blow at the sandbenders. The library begins to sink more quickly beneath the sand. Toph has to choose. Biting her lip, she turns away from Appa and concentrates on bending the library back out of the sand.

TOPH (cont'd)
(sotto)
I'm sorry, Appa.

INT. LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Katara is now hiding from the knowledge spirit in the book stacks. She hides behind a marble column, panting heavily. She looks to her side, where Momo is hiding behind another column, also panting heavily. They hear the approaching RUSTLE of the owl's feathers. Katara looks up at the spire that the kids climbed down through -- it's right across from her, and the rope they used is still fastened.

ON WAN SHI TONG, who is stalking them through the aisles of books. He sees Momo's tail sticking out from behind the marble column.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
At least I'll have one specimen to add to my collection.

MOMO
(SHRIEKS)

The knowledge spirit makes a dive for Momo, but the lemur dodges his attack and flees. Katara rushes to Momo's aid, facing the giant owl-dragon. She pulls out her water pouch, preparing to bend from it.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
Your Waterbending won't do you much good here.
(demonstrating stances)
I've studied Northern Water style, Southern Water style, even "Foggy Swamp style."

Suddenly, Sokka comes speeding down the corridor with Aang on his glider, and SMACKS the owl in the back of the head with his club.

SOKKA
That's called Sokka style! Learn it!

The spirit is staggered just long enough for Aang to scoop up Katara and Momo. They all glide up to the entry spire together, then...

SOKKA (cont'd)
Wait.

He looks down at the snarling owl monster, then down at the bookshelves, where the professor is still staring at a row of books.

SOKKA (cont'd)
Professor! Let's go!

PROFESSOR ZEI
I'm not leaving. I can't. I've spent too long trying to find this place. There's not another collection of knowledge like this on earth.
(eerily peaceful)
I could spend an eternity in here...

KATARA
(urging her friends)
Just go!

Sokka scampers up the rope and helps his friends to safety.

EXT. DESERT GROUND - LIBRARY SPIRE - SPIRE

The gang climbs out of the window in the spire and jumps to the ground a few feet below. Toph, exhausted from holding up the library, releases it, and it disappears beneath the surface.

SOKKA
We got it! There's a solar eclipse coming. The Fire Nation's in trouble now!

He notices that Toph is not sharing his joy. Aang looks around at the empty desert -- suddenly, it dawns on him...

AANG
Where's Appa?

Unable to speak, Toph just shakes her head "NO" and buries her face in her hands.

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW